

Translation to Creativity Reading in Aurobindo's -Translation of Sanskrit works

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The literary world created by Yogi Sri Aurobindo is quite astounding. Wielding a facile pen in English with almost a gush of mother-tongue he had offered to the world a rich bonanza. He had blessed the themes and their expressions with his God-gifted power of communication, very dexterously balancing the sound and sense of the language. His treatment of the topic transformed into a new creativity. It had justified the ways of a famous English poet, "Poet is an unacknowledged legislator of the world." Yogi Sri Aurobindo's writings touched various subjects from politics to poetics and from spirituality to Sanskrit. Everywhere in his writings, we find the freshness of the dawn that brings new rays of life.

As the title of the paper speaks, I confine my scope to the translation of Sanskrit classics by Yogi Sri Aurobindo. I cannot fail to recount the titles such as Agni Sukta in Rigveda (A mystic fire); Bhartrihari's Nitishatakam, Bhasa's Svapnavāsavadattam, Kalidasa Kumārasambhavam (1st and 2nd canto) Vikramorvashīyam and some portion of Malavikagnimitram. He had expressed his thoughts on Rāmāyana, Mahābhārat, Bhagvadgitā and Yoga. He had also dilated on the method of his translation of Kalidasa's plays positing his own theory of translation. In course of his paraphrases, he dealt at length on Kalidasa's seasons i.e. Ritusamhar, Vikram and Nymph (i.e. Vikramorvashīyam) and selected notes on the Kumarasambhavam.

Purvarang or Prelude to the translation activities in Bengal

As we discuss the translation of Sanskrit works in English by Sri Aurobindo, it inevitably calls for the discussion on the background of translation activity in Bengal before Sri Aurobindo nearly a century before. With the advent of British in India, Calcutta emerged as a centre for cultural transformation in India. With the

foundation of Asiatic society in 1784 at Calcutta by Sir William Jones, Sanskrit studies received a new impetus. The translation activity got a momentum and till the time of Sri Aurobindo, we get the four phases of the activity of translation in Bengal. Prof. Mrinmoy Pramanik, a Professor of comparative Indian languages and literature put the phases as follows – (i) Orientalists Phase (ii) Anglicized phase (iii) Nationalist phase (iv) Turn of the century phase. The orientalist phase was totally dominated by British Sanskritists. N.B. Halhed's translation of Manusmṛiti, Charles Wilkin's translation of Bhagavadgita marked this phase. The objective behind this exercise was purely administrative. It was to facilitate the colonial rule to run the Indian administration by understanding the Indian Psyche. The beginning of the nineteenth century was termed as Anglicized phase wherein the Indian intellectuals like Raja Rammohan Roy, favouring English education began to intervene the colonial version of ancient texts. Raja Rammohan Roy translated Isha and Kena Upanishad. Fidelity in translation, was the assuring element as against the British colonial versions of our ancient texts. The later half of the nineteenth century was termed as the Nationalist phase, where in Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Michale Madhusudan Datta played a great role. As Prof. Pramanik points out, the objects behind these translations was to establish the glory of Indian cultural heritage. It is said that these translations combated with the tendency of British rulers to denigrate our scripture. The fourth phase emerged with the turn of the century of which Robindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh were the unquestionable masters. This phase was marked by the process of resistance, expression of identity and resurrection of native self. Sri Aurobindo had heard about the personalities like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshvchandra Sen, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekanand from his grand-father Rishi Rajanarayan Bose. This might have exercised a spiritual impact on the subconscious mind of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo's flair for languages

While Sri Aurobindo was studying at St. Paul school in London, he had attained a great proficiency in Greek and Latin. His competence to acquire language-skills was astounding. Shri Aurobindo secured Butterworth prize for literature which was basically for his excellence in Greek and Latin in which he used to compose poems. During his childhood in Manchester he had learnt French and also attained the appreciable knowledge of German, Italian and Spanish, the knowledge of which was sufficient for him to read and understand Goethe and Dante in original. Sri Aurobindo's florid achievement in European languages besides English, certainly helped him to acquire a high degree of proficiency in understanding classics. At Cambridge, he won the approbation for his essay on Shakespere and Milton in their linguistic parlance. He secured first division in "Classical Tripos" at Cambridge. This multi-pronged linguistic ability of Sri Aurobindo seems manifested in his writings in English. Back home, as a lecturer in French first and then a Professor of English in Baroda College, Sri Aurobindo learnt Indian languages, especially Bengali, Although Bengali was his mother-tongue he had a very scanty knowledge of the same. The insistence of Dr. Krishnadhan Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo's father, to keep their children away from the influence of native culture and language, and nurture them under Anglican way of living as also the alienation of Sri Aurobindo from his motherland since his childhood, had greatly affected his comprehension of Bengali, his own mother tongue. Now, he had acquired the knowledge of Bengali and studied the literature of Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Michale Madhusudan Datto. The Baroda period (1893-1906) was a very significant period in the life of Sri Aurobindo, as it was the period during which flowered the poetic genius of Sri Aurobindo and the world at large realized the wonderful linguistic potentialities of this prodigious personality on the earth. Having realized that Sanskrit is a key to understand Indian life, Culture and Philosophy, Sri Aurobindo had

studied Sanskrit language and literature in all its intensity to master the sacred and profane literature in Sanskrit. And he blessed the literary world by his beautiful translations of Vedic scriptures and Sanskrit classics in English. The most cultivated Sanskrit language got a new birth in the highly idiomatic English language, the queen's tongue, at the magic touch by Sri Aurobindo. In his writings the themes and expressions embellished each other. These were not merely translations but transcreations where creativity had a divine dance. He did not rest content by doing only translations, he had also offered fresh interpretations of these texts. Creativity and criticism, thus, went hand in hand and had been held in mutual cadence. During his Baroda days, Sri Aurobindo had already studied Marathi and Gujarathi, that helped him to run the local administration as a Civil Servant in the Revenue department in the estate of Sayajirao Gaikwad. His association with his Maharashtrian friends was unique. It can be observed that K.G.Deshpande and Shri Lele had a share in influencing the political and spiritual life of Sri Aurobindo respectively. Thus, the Baroda days of Sri Aurobindo was a busy period of literary activity as most of the translations had been done during this period.

A discourse on Translation

Reading into the translations by Sri Aurobindo, invariably calls for the desideratum to deal with the concept of “translation” as a discourse. A very commonplace quotation about translation is that of a French Journalist Jacques Barzan, who says – “Translation is not spinning a thread, it is to put ballot on paper, sufficient reason but no excuse for the inevitable blunder. To speak in terms of Aesthetics we may quote the great Italian scholar of Aesthetics, Benedetto Croce who says – A corollary of this is the impossibility of translations” in so far as they pretend to effect the remoulding of one expression into another; like a liquid poured from a vase of a certain shape into a vase of another shape. We can elaborate logically what we have already

elaborated in aesthetic form only; but we cannot reduce what has already possessed its aesthetic form to another form also aesthetic. Indeed, every translation either diminishes and spoils, or it creates a new expression by putting the former back into the crucial and mingling with personal impressions of the so-called translators (Benedetto Croce). Coming to Sanskrit terms the word *anuvada* is used to denote the transference of contents from one language (i.e. source language) to another (i.e. target language). Vishnushastri Chipalunkar, the staunch exponent of Marathi in British days wrote his essay on "भाषांतर" the term he used for "translation", wherein he emphasized that a translator must possess unquestionable command over both the languages. He also cautioned about the impediments coming in doing the translation. In illustration of his point he referred to a Sanskrit quotation as follows :-

सौवर्णानि सरोजानि निर्मातुं सन्ति शिल्पिनः।
तत्र सौरभनिर्माणे चतुरश्वतुराननः"

“Artisans are there to make golden lotuses; but to create fragrance therein, it is the creator alone, the dexterous.” It is also interesting to discuss the concept in the linguistic and cultural milieu. In the literary translations we need to deal with the problem of cultural recontextualization. The known authority on translation and the former Professor of German at J.N.U., New Delhi, Dr. Pramod Talgeri says :- Let us summarize that literary translation basically revolves round the semantic congruence with the intentionality of the original text. In that translator translates the literary source language text and records it in his translations, while doing this he recontextualizes the literary experience of the source language text in a new cultural and linguistic recontextualization (Talgeri – 1984). Whereas, another scholar P.Lal calls translation as transcreation when he says :- faced by such a variety of material the translator must edit, reconcile, and transmute, his job in many ways becomes largely a matter of transcreation (P. Lal – 1981) In the assessment of

translation one needs to address these issues.

Sri Aurobindo's views on translation

It is customary that the translator in his introduction to the translation of text at hand, gives his own views and experience about his translation. Sometimes a separate discussion could be found about translating shastric texts, such as Prof. A.A. Macdonnel writing on translation of Rigveda or Prof. George Cardona writing on translation of Panini's rules. Sri Aurobindo was a creative writer as well as a conscious critic. He had written articles on “Translating Kalidasa” as well as “Translating the Upanishada”. And in a way he had posited his own theory of translation by substantiating evidences. For this paper, I confine myself to the views of Sri Aurobindo on translating Kalidasa into English.

In an exhaustive essay “On Translating Kalidasa” Sri Aurobindo had explained his approach to the translation of Kalidasa into English judiciously considering the potentialities and shortcomings of both the tongues in venturing such a delicate task. At the outset, it must be said that Sri Aurobindo's approach is that of a creative artist. He is not an indifferent onlooker to the translation. In the very beginning, he had made it clear that “the life and surroundings in which Indian poetry moves cannot be rendered in terms of English poetry (Aurobindo P.236). Translation is not just a transposition of words from one language to another. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo “the business of poetical translation is to reproduce not the exact word but the exact image, association and poetical beauty and flavour of the original. (Aurobindo P. 238). Here, Sri Aurobindo's views corresponds with the view expressed by Croce in his “Aesthetics”. Sri Aurobindo was in favour of poetical translation wherein transmutation of feelings and transference of images are important than the literal translation where word-to-word replacement is preferred. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo:- “A literal translation spreads only erroneous impression to the general readers

(Aurobindo P239). Regarding the translation of mythological images from the source language text to the target language text, Sri Aurobindo, preferred to use the corresponding mythological images from the western mythology. In translating a line from Purva – Megha – 58 – “श्यामः पादो बलिनियमनाभ्युद्यतस्येव विष्णोः”, the reference to cfy in Indian mythology had been couched in translation as “Titan”, a figure in Greek mythology, as it appeals to the English mind and conveys the force and temperament conveyed by the word cfy in Indian mythology. Here, I feel that there is a “Cultural recontextualization in translation” as mentioned by Prof. Talgeri. Elsewhere, also in Sanskrit translations of Shakespear's Hamlet, namely दीनार्कराजकुमारहेमालेखम् by Sukhmoy Muhopadhyaya and by S. D. Joshi and चन्द्रसेनः Vignahari Deo. A similar cultural recontextualisation can be seen in Marathi also. Vikaravilasita by Gopal Ganesh Agarkar is an instance in point. Sri Aurobindo had elaborated his point saying – “This method of eliciting all the values of original of which I have given rather extreme instance, I have applied with great frequency where a pregnant mythological allusion or striking or subtle picture or image calls for adequate representation more especially perhaps in pictures or images connected with birds and animals unfamiliar or slightly familiar to English reader (P.239). Sri Aurobindo had given two instances for the changes he had made in the translation. In the line अल्पाल्पभासं खद्योतविलसितनिभां विद्युदुन्मेषदृष्टिं (उत्तरमेघ-20) Sri Aurobindo's translation goes beyond the verbal meaning, catches the image and articulates in the expression “A flickering line of fire-flies seen in sleep” – He apologizes for this translation saying – Kalidasa says nothing equivalent to our suggesting “Seen in Sleep”, but I had to render somehow the impression of night and dim unreality created by dreamy movement and whispering assonance of the lines” Similarly, the reference to चक्रवाक bird and poetic convention associated with it, is shown in the line दूरीभूते मयि सहचरे चक्रवाकमिवैकाम् (उत्तरमेघ 22) has been rendered in the translation “Sole like a widowed bird, when all the nests are

making”. The original allusion जव चक्रवाक is slighted and a relative image in the expression mentioned above is suggested to bring home the real import to the English reader. Here, Sri Aurobindo candidly confessed that. “I can only plead an apology that translators are always incorrigible sinners in this respect and that I have sinned less than others; moreover, except in one or two instances, these additions have always been suggested either by the sound or substances of the original. (P.239). To describe this stand by Sri Aurobindo one is reminded of the expression used by John Webster in his work 'Duchess of Malphi' namely “he is more sinned against than sinning” In translation one has to approximate with the text. In dealing with the problem of adhering more closely to the text in the task of translation Sri Aurobindo says :- “The answer to this is that such closeness is imperative, but it must be closeness of word – value, not oneness of word – meaning; into this word - value there enter the elements of association, sound and aesthetic beauty.” (Aurobindo P.241). Sound – suggestion carried a greater importance in translation. The words जल आप and सलिल all mean “water' in English, but each has a specific context. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo सलिल denotes beautiful suggestions of grace, brightness, softness and clearness. Sri Aurobindo sums up this as follows – “Everything therefore depends on the skill and felicity of the translator and he must be judged rather by the accuracy with which he renders the emotional and aesthetic value of each expression than brought to a rigid regard for each word in the original.” (Aurobindo P.241). Sri Aurobindo had said elsewhere that to show “essential fidelity” he had taken “apparent freedom” in translation and had boldly concluded that “At the same time it would be disingenuous to deny that in at least a dozen places of each poem, -more perhaps in the longer ones – I have slipped into words and touches which have no justification in the original. This is a literary offence which is always condemnable and always committed. (Aurobindo P.245).

As regards the employment of metres in his translation Sri

Aurobindo had used “blank verse” in the translation of “Vikramorvashiyam, a play by Kalidas. He says :- I have therefore, thought it best, taking into consideration the poetical feeling and harmonious flow of Kalidasa's prose to use blank verse throughout varying it's pitch according as the original form is metrical or prose and the emotion or imagery more or less exalted.” (Aurobindo P.246). Although the translation of Vikramorvashiyam is the earlier attempt on the part of Sri Aurobindo to use blank verse; he was quite at home in that venture. Dr. A.N.Dwivedi observes :- “Sri Aurobindo used blank verse in his poetry in a masterly fashion. Shakespeare and Milton in English Literature and Toru Dutt in Indo-Anglian literature had used it before him. Blank verse is not an easy tool and has tended to be wooden and declamatory in the less safe hands, but thanks to the genius of Sri Aurobindo that he displayed a remarkable sense and grasp of it, and employed it in his verse with beauty and vigour” (Dwivedi – 1971 P .16). As regards the translation of Meghadutam (Cloud – Messenger), the things are different Meghadutam had been composed by Kalidas in Mandakranta metre. Sri Aurobindo says : This Mandakrant (gently – stepping) stanza is entirely quantitative and too complicated to be rendered into any corresponding accentual form. In casting about for a meter I was only certain of one thing that neither “blank verse” nor royal quatrain stanza would serve my purpose the one has not the necessary basis of harmonics; in the other the recurrence is too rigid, sharply defined and unvarying to represent the eternal swell and surge of Kalidas's stanza. Fortunately, by an inspiration and without deliberate choice, Kalidasa's lines, as I begin turning them, flowed into the form of triple rhyme and that necessarily suggested the terza rima. This metre, as I have treated it, seems to me to reproduce with as much accuracy as the difference between the languages allows, the spiritual and emotional atmosphere of the Cloud – Messenger. (Aurobindo P.247). It can be summarized that the approach by Sri Aurobindo towards translation was of the nature of cognition and creativity. It is pertinent to quote

Prof. Pramanik who thinks that translation for Sri Aurobindo is a cognitive process that operates on three levels namely uke i.e. name रूप i.e Form of meaning and स्वरूप i.e essential figure of truth.

Delving into Aurobindo's Translations

For the fear of prolixity. I confine my domain of appreciation to the translations by Sri Aurobindo of the Kalidasa's classics namely “Vikramorvashiyam and Kumārasambhavam”. Let me in all humility confess that I have no competence to evaluate the translations by Sri Aurobindo. Such a venture will amount to an insolence to the poetic genius of Sri Aurobindo. Instead, I try to find excellences in his translation by comparing those with the translations done by the British Sanskritists in the late nineteenth century. An attempt is made to understand the charm and seek semantic congruity in the translation by Sri Aurobindo.

The followings are the instances from the play “Vikramorvashiyam “

आविर्भूते शशिनि तमसा मुच्यमानेव रात्रिर्
नैषस्यार्चिर्हुतभुज इव च्छिन्नभूयिष्ठधूमा।
मोहेनान्तर्वरतनुरियं लक्ष्यते मुक्तकल्पा

गङ्गरोधःपतनकलुषा गृह्णतीव प्रसादम् Act I-8

The translation by Prof Cowell who had followed the translation by H.H. Wilson and consulted the edition by Lenz in Latin, is as follows -

“Like the night, when it escapes from the darkness, at the rising of the Moon;

Or like the flame of the nocturnal fire, when it bursts through the thickness

Of the smoke, is seen free from fainting; like Ganga as she flows back to

Serenity, when the fall of the bank hath troubled her waters”
Now,, Sri Aurobindo's pen flashes the strokes of beauty as follows:-

“So have I seen a glorious night

Delivered out of darkness by the Moon

Nocturnal fire breaks through with crest of brightness
 It's prison of deep smoke. Her beauty awakening,
 From swoon and almost rescued, to my thoughts
 Brings Ganges as I saw her once O'erwhelmed
 With roar and ruin of her banks, race wild,
 Thickening, then gradually from the turmoil
 Grow clear, emerging into golden calm”

E.B.Cowell was a Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford and had displayed his taste for Sanskrit composition, that a small couplets composed in Sanskrit are to his credit, which he read them in the beginning of his Presidential address to the “Aryan Section” he delivered at the 9th International Congress of orientologists, held at London in 1892. But following Wilson and Lenz, Cowell's translation is prosaic and lacks the grace and grandeur that adorn the translation by Sri Aurobindo. In the translation by Sri Aurobindo there is a modulation as the lines run. “Delivered out of darkness by the Moon” for मुच्यमानेव रात्रिर् and prison of dim smoke भूयिष्ठधूमा are the striking parallels. The force in गङ्गरोधःपतन had been beautifully conveyed by the phrase “O'erwhelmed with roar and ruin of her banks, race wild प्रसादम् metaphorically rendered as “emerging into golden calm” all these speak about the rare flashes of poetic genius of Sri Aurobindo.

Again, in –

यदेवोपनतं दुःखात्सुखं तद्रसवत्तरम्।

निर्वाणाय तरूच्छाया तप्तस्य हि विषेषतः Act III -21

Cowell translates :

That which seemed sorrow, while it was near, after the interval of a year is joy; the shadow of the tree is most a rest to him who hath been scorched by the Moon.

As against this translation by Cowell, Sri Aurobindo gently puts –

For happiness arising after pain
 Tastes therefore sweeter, as the shady tree
 To one perplexed with heat and dust affords

A keener taste of paradise.

Herein, Sri Aurobindo offers a rich fare of his literary of genre. While Cowell failed to convey the word – image in रसवत्तरम् Sri Aurobindo caught it in “Tastes therefore sweeter” simple lines but eloquent. The word "निर्वाणाय" gets a finer touch as “A keener taste of paradise” at the hands of Sri Aurobindo, the translation “most a rest” by Cowell pale into insignificance thereby. The blank verse character of Sri Aurobindo's translation gives him scope to float his poetic sensibility –

Again,

नवजलधरः सन्नद्धोयं न दृष्टनिशाचरः

सुरधनुरिदं दूराकृष्टं न नाम शरासनम्।

अयमपि पटुर्धारासारो न बाणपरंपरा

कनकनिकषस्त्रिग्धा विद्युत्प्रिया न ममोर्वशी ACT IV- 1

Cowell translates :

Ah no ! it is your shower – armed cloud, and no haughty demon of night, it is yonder bow of heaven drawn to its full, and no bow for earthly arrows, it is yon keen – shafted shower, and not succession of arrows, it is the lightening glistening like a streak of gold and touch – stone, and not my own loved Urvashi.

The mad ravings of Pururavas searching for his beloved Urvashi are depicted here. In this stanza Sri Aurobindo cares more for लक्षणा (Indication) than अभिधा (denotation). Sri Aurobindo renders the stanza as follows –

This was a cloud, equipped for rains, no proud and lustful fiend,

The rain-bow, not a weapon drawn to kill,

Quick – driving – showers are there, not

Sleety rain of arrows – and the brilliant line like streak

OF gold upon touch-stone, cloud-Messenger I saw, was lightening, not my Urvashi ^uoty/kj* translated by Cowell as “Shower-armed cloud” does not appeal the readers as” cloud equipped for rains” translated by Sri Aurobindo. Such instances are numerous in the translation by Sri Aurobindo.

Turning to “Kumarasambhavam” “The Birth of War-God” which is one of the five famous Mahakavyas in Sanskrit, of which only first two cantoes have been translated by Sri Aurobindo. A comparison of his translation with that of by Prof RTH Griffith may reveal the strikingness that the translation claims at the hands of Sri Aurobindo.

The example follows :-

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः
पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधी विगाह्य

स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्डः Canto 1 - 1

Griffith translates in brief –

For in the north Himalaya lifting high
His towery summits till they cleave the sky
Spans the wide land of Hills, instinct with Deity.

Whereas Sri Aurobindo sings in the glory of words as follows-

A God concealed in mountain majesty
Embodied to our cloudy physical sight
In snowy summits and green-glories slopes
To northward of the many –rivered land,
Measuring the earth in an enormous ease.

The word "देवतात्मा" is literally translated by Griffith as “Instinct with Deity” whereas Sri Aurobindo had elaborated it to eulogize its importance. The concept of "मानदण्ड" is eloquently expressed by Sri Aurobindo by the expression “Measuring the earth in an enormous ease” with an alliterative force.

In another instance –

अनन्तप्रभवस्य यस्य
हिमं न सौभाग्यविलोपि जातम् ।
एको हि दोषो गुणसन्निपातो

निमज्जितीन्दोः किरणेष्विवाडकः ।। Canto I – 3

“Griffith goes to translate –

Proud mountain king ! his diadem of snow

Dims not the beauty of his gems below
 For who can gaze upon the Moon, and dare
 To mark one spot less brightly glorious there ?
 Who, mid a thousand virtues, dares to blame
 One shade of weekness in a hero's fame.

At the hands of Sri Aurobindo the melodious strain runs –
 “So is he in his infinite riches dressed
 Not all his snow can slay that opulence
 As drowned in luminous floods the mark though dens
 On the moon's argent disc, so faints oppressed
 \ One fault mid crowding virtues fading from our sense.

Sri Aurobindo operates on the level of cognition, when he translates अनन्तरत्नप्रभावः He understands the स्वरूप of the word and conveys it's meaning in his unconventional way as “infinite riches dressed "सौभाग्य" getting the status of “opulence” is striking.

In another instance a vivid image had been captured by Sri Aurobindo through his gifted pen –

तुषारसंघातशिलाः सुराग्रैः
 समुल्लिखन्दर्पकलः ककुब्दान्।
 दृष्टः कथञ्चिद् द्वयैर्विविधै-
 -रसोढ सिंहध्वनिरून्नाद AA I – 56

Griffith translates,

The holy bull before his master's feet
 Shook the hard-frozen earth with echoing feet
 And as he heard the lion's roaring swell
 In distant thunder from the rocky dell

Sri Aurobindo take these lines to a newer poetic height, as follows :-

“On the white rocks compact of frozen snow
 His great Bull voicing loud immortal pride
 Pawned with his hoof the argent soil to dust
 Alarmed the Bisons fled his gaze : he bellowed
 Impatient of the mountain roar”.

This reminds one of the picturesqueness of Keat's poems.

Sri Aurobindo had written quite exhaustive notes on some

words in the shlokas of First canto of Kumarasambhavam. Those are neither Philological or mythological notes; they unfold the intrinsic beauty therein. These notes also speak volumes about the scholarly acumen of this epoch-making poet. Sri Aurobindo had also elaborated a few stanzas from Meghadutam “Cloud – Messages” to reveal the aesthetic sensibility. The more we try to understand the magic poetic touch of Aurobindo in his translation, the more we feel “enraptured, feasted, fed”. We are only left to marvel at his divine ministry. Here, it may not be out of place to quote Mathew Arnold on Shakespeare -

“Others abide our question,
Thou art free,
We ask and ask;
Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge”

We share the same experience when we read these translations by Shri Aurobindo

Creativity : Par excellence

As has been already said, reading the translation of Kalidasa's works by Sri Aurobindo, one gets bliss beyond beatitude. There is an experience of a kind of विगलित-वेद्यान्तरमानन्दम् (a delight where in ought else is dissolved) to which a reader is subjected. This all happens because his translations turn out to be a new creativity, that is born out of Sri Aurobindo's prophetic प्रतिभा Sri Aurobindo did not translate Kalidas, he recreated him in his own divinity of poetic firmament. Sri Aurobindo approached translations as a creative artist, as a poet. A poet is endowed with 'प्रतिभाविशेषः' Anandvardhan, the great Kashmirian aesthete says in his Dhavanyaloka, Udyola I –

सरस्वती स्वादु तदर्थवस्तु
निष्यन्दमाना महतां कवीनाम्
अलोकसामान्यमभिव्यनक्ति
परिस्फुरन्तं प्रतिभाविशेषम्

“The Goddess of learning herself, out of divine grace, so weaves out

the theme overflowing with emotion, the quintessence of poetic art, to devise which no conscious effort is needed on the part of the poet, as to reveal the light of the poet's genius that shines forth with a transcendent halo. Sri Aurobindo endorses this view in his essay on "Sources of poetry" as follows:- All poetry is an inspiration, a thing breathed into the thinking organ from above, it is recorded in the mind but is born in the higher principle of direct knowledge or ideal vision which surpasses mind. It is in reality a revelation. The prophetic or revealing power sees the substance, the inspiration perceives the right perception". (Aurobindo P 105) Creativity in Sri Aurobindo had transformed translations in the अपूर्ववस्तु (a thing unconceived hither to before.) It is a kind of निर्मिती a creation, which is ल्हादैकमयीम् (of a nature of pure delight). The translation of Kalidsa's works by Sri Aurobindo is a "creativity par excellence". In these translations Sri Aurobindo had blessed the literary world twice. Not only the grace and grandeur of Sanskrit language and literature of Kalidas had been revealed, but the English literature had also been enriched, when the potentialities of the language were enlivened by the facile pen wielded by Sri Aurobindo.

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